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~~53~~. An automated call distribution system according to claim ⁹~~52~~ wherein said means operable to receive the help request and contact the user of the customer terminal using the contact channel identified in the help request comprises a live agent workstation.

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~~54~~. An automated call distribution system according to claim ⁹~~52~~ wherein said means operable to receive the help request and contact the user of the customer terminal using the contact channel identified in the help request comprises an IVR callback system.

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~~55~~. An automated call distribution system according to claim ⁹~~52~~ wherein:
the server is operable to receive an identification of a web page the user is visiting and to provide this to the call center;
the call center is operable to set up the live agent workstation to the web page the user is visiting.

56. A server for providing network service to a customer terminal, the server comprising one or more pages downloadable to the customer terminal operable to:
provide a remote help option selectable by a user of the customer terminal;
upon selection of the remote help option, send a help request to a call center identifying a contact channel through which the user of the customer terminal can be reached.

57. A server according to claim 62 wherein the remote help option provides for the selection of one of a plurality of different contact channels.

58. A server according to claim 52 wherein the remote help option provides for the selection of either a voice over IP connection or a PSTN connection as the contact channel.

59. A call center, comprising:
an outbound dialing system capable of setting up a blended inbound/outbound call environment containing a list of telephone numbers and/or IP addresses;
an ACD (automated call distribution) system which distributes actual calls on the basis of the list connecting agent workstations to customers via the PSTN or voice over IP;
a CGI (common gateway interface) adapted to collect help requests from a web server and feeds them to the outbound dialing system or ACD.

60. The call center of claim 59 wherein the help requests include a URL with respect to which help was requested which is provided to the agent workstation connected to a given customer.

61. The call center of claim 59 further comprising:
an ACD-MIS (ACD management information system) system connected to the ACD system for determining anticipated wait times for response;
a multi-media message manager for prioritizing callbacks and for generating messages to be sent back via the CGI to be sent to the customer with an anticipated wait time (determined by the ACD-MIS).

62. The call center of claim 61 further, comprising a call center customer information system queriable on the basis of contents of the help request for information pertaining to a given customer to be presented to a help agent when providing help to the given customer.

63. The call center of claim 62 wherein the call center customer information system is queriable on the basis of a customer telephone number.

64. A call center comprising:
a CGI (computer telephony interface) server adapted to collect help requests from one or more customer contact channels including the WWW;
an IVR (interactive voice response) callback system;
an ACD (automatic call distribution system); and
an outbound dialing system for making calls to the customers and connecting them to the IVR callback system or to an ACD system.

65. The call center of claim 64 wherein the contact channels are selected from a group comprising at least WWW, voice mail, IVR, and E-mail.

66. A help requesting apparatus for conveying help requests to a call center, the apparatus comprising:
a WWW server comprising means for providing access by customers to a web page including a help request interface for receiving requests for help from customers;

CGI (Common Gateway Interface) programs for communicating the requests for help to the call center.

67. An apparatus according to claim 66 wherein the help request comprises a URL and a phone number or IP address.

68. An apparatus according to claim 66 further adapted to receive anticipated wait times from the call center through the CGI interface and to send messages back to the customers with anticipated wait times.

69. A multi-media message management system comprising a server, a multi-media message manager and a call center, wherein:

the server is adapted to provide information content to users through a data network and for receiving help requests from users through the data network;

the multi-media message manager is connected to a plurality of contact channels of at least two different types, to collect help requests received through each of these channels and produce a combined list of contacts that need to be made; and

the multi-media message manager is also connected to the call center for coordinating the delivery of help responses on the basis of the combined list.

70. A multi-media message management system according to claim 69 wherein the multi-media message manager further comprises means allowing an agent or supervisor to review all of the help requests and prioritize and schedule the combined list.

71. A multi-media message management system according to claim 69 wherein at least one of the help requests includes a preferred callback time specified by a user, wherein the multi-media message manager prioritizes the combined list taking the preferred callback time into account.

72. A multi-media message management system according to claim 69 adapted to receive help requests through contact channels comprising one or more of voice mail, E-mail, WWW, IVR, and ADSI IVR.

73. A multi-media message management system according to claim 69 wherein the call center is adapted to make calls through the PSTN and voice over IP channels.

74. A multi-media message management system according to claim 69 further comprising: means in the call center for making an estimate of an anticipated caller wait time (or other parameters) and passing this to the multi-media message manager which coordinates forwarding the information to the caller through an appropriate contact channel.

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~~75~~. An inbound call processing system for processing calls from customer premises equipment comprising a telephone with a telephone line, and a network access device connected with a CTI enabled line, the inbound call processing system comprising:

a multimedia server, a call center;

at least one an agent workstation;

a CTI enabled switch;

a broad band multimedia data network wherein customer network access devices are connectable to the multimedia server are over the broadband data network to run a multimedia application provided by the server, and the customer telephone connections are over the PSTN and a subsequent connection to the broadband data network;

the multimedia application comprising a make call option which when selected initiates a series of steps to set up a call to an ACD system by signaling to the CTI enabled switch to ring the customer's telephone line prompting the customer to pick up the handset, and upon sensing that the customer has indeed picked up the set, then dials the call center automatically, where an ACD system distributes the call to an ACD agent workstation.

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~~76~~. The inbound call processing system of claim ¹³~~75~~ wherein the CTI enabled switch is SCAI (switch to computer application interface) or other third party call control enabled.

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~~77~~. The inbound call processing system of claim ¹³~~75~~ comprising:
in each agent workstation, a calling line ID system for identifying a telephone number of an inbound call;

a customer information database queriable on the basis of the telephone number for information related to a customer which is then made available to the agent.